1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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us in danger, sickness etc.' When we enquired whether their dead lived on as spirits he replied, they did not consider whether the departed were living or dead, they were just spirits, in Tamil *sami* or *dewi*, in Sinhalese *yako*; all spirits were alike, neither good nor bad. Another coast Vedda named Patiniya told us that their religion was that of the Tamils. In memory of their dead, whom they called *yako*, they cooked rice and ate it; they invoked the *yaka* in sickness, etc.[1]"

Just as Kapalpei sent sickness, so death was also attributed to him, but perhaps not epidemics, for it appeared to be generally considered that a single death would satisfy him for the time, so that it would be days or weeks before he would be expected to send sickness or death again.

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 498.

8: Spittel D-8 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

own departed; spirits, real and intimate, inhabiting like themselves rock and tree and stream; human enough to pester or assist, to take vengeance if angered, and, if propitiated, tutelary over the Vedda's abodes. It is owing to the maliciousness of these spirits, and less from any fear of wild animals, that the Vedda is averse to travelling alone in the jungle; though, when necessity compels, he will do so, armed only with his little axe. Nor do they permit their women to adorn themselves too much for fear of attracting the *ketha* (devil).*

When a person dies it is the *ketha* that killed him; and the *ketha* of the dead one remains by the corpse and haunts the vicinity for years. Hence the great fear these people have of their dead; a fear that sometimes makes them cover with leaves and abandon a dying person, be he or she their best beloved, lest their necks be squeezed; a fear that keeps them away for years from caves where deaths have occurred.

In the course of time the spirit of a dead person loses its individuality in a general spirit world, the spirits of the more recently dead, and therefore the better known to succeeding generations, supplanting the older. A belief embodying the beautiful thought, that we really do not die until those who knew us and loved us are also dead.

The Vedda religion then is a cult of the spirits of the dead; not so much an ancestor worship, though a few names of long dead Veddas, such as Bilinde Yakka and Kande Yakka have a place in it, as a homage to spirits recently deceased (*Nae-Yakka*).†

The named demons of the pure Veddas are few, and their propitiatory ceremonies but two or three. Nevertheless, a half-Vedda devil-dancer of Galmede gave me the names of a hundred devils, and unctuously expounded a demonology as involved as it was terrible; taking special delight in describing a dance in which men with hideous masks and jangling bells attached to deer-skin greaves, their bodies stained in imitation of blood, swayed great Vedda *audes* mounted on carved handles, and made the forest echo to thundering drum-beats and demoniac yells.

Of male demons there were:—(1) Tree demons of the *Na* and *Bo* tree; seven to each tree in order of precedence: (2) Rock demons (*Gal-vanniyas*) named after various hills: (3) Flower demons (*Ravathath*): (4) *Bandara* demons; (5) *Vanniyas*—the spirits of four Veddas who were crushed to death in a cave by the fall of the rock overhead; with a shout of "ha" they were transformed into devils. Then there were innumerable female demons, a wife to each male demon (*Kalusalees*, *Peli-hanayas* and *Hanna-hanayas*).

From all this it will not be wondered at that the Veddas are highly superstitious, and ascribe to many an ordinary incident of life supernatural significance. It is, for instance, an ill omen to meet a Buddhist priest or Moorman when setting out on a journey, or to knock the big toe against a stone or stump. Should a gekko cry when a plan is under discussion, or a blood-sucker‡ or Brahamin lizard fall on one, the portent is bad.

*The Veddas seem to make no distinction between the words devil and spirit, the term *yakka* being used for either; thus *Gal-Yakka* means rock-demon, *Nae-Yakka* ancestral spirit. *Ketha* also means spirit or devil and is, if anything, the more malevolent being. *Vanniya* is another word synonymous with *yakka* and *ketha*.

†The Veddas, by Seligmann: page 30.

‡A species of lizard.